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THE ANNEXATION OF MEXICO.

BY M. ROMERO, MEXICAN MINISTER TO THE UNITED STATES.

THE opportunity to discuss questions of transcendent character is certainly when they are not being agitated, because the public mind is not excited then, and reason can have its full sway. Such is now the case with the question, which can hardly be so called, of the annexation of Mexico to the United States.

None of the political parties, and, in fact, no sensible man in this country, now favors any such scheme, if attempted to be brought about by force, and I think that very few would accept it, even in case it was asked voluntarily by Mexico, should they fully weigh the very serious consequences which that step would entail. It is only a few selfish persons interested in promoting and obtaining personal ends, regardless of the consequences to their own country, who would really favor annexation at any cost.

In two ways could annexation be accomplished—by conquest or by the voluntary act of Mexico. As I have already said, I do not think that there is now a political party in the United States which favors the conquest of Mexico. Although it is innate with every people,—the wish to increase its power and area,—such a wish is quite different from a spirit of conquest, although sometimes that end could not be accomplished but by conquest.

The very political organization of this country and its traditions show very plainly that the United States are not a conquering country. Conquest and subjugation of a people are against the principles proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, and incorporated

afterwards in the Constitution of the United States, which established a government by the people and for the people. Therefore, when the United States assume, if they shall ever do so, the role of conquerors, they will have to undergo a very essential change in their present institutions, and there is no indication for the present, so far as I can judge, that any such change will take place in the near future.

Should the United States ever attain that solidarity of political union which merges the individual into the nation, as in some countries, where the sovereignty of the nation has all the attributes of a personality, while the individual significance of the people is lost, that change of institutions might easily take place; but in the United States the unity of sovereignties is now the individual, represented by majorities, while Mexico, on the contrary, is as compact a country as any European nation, and the different changes in her form of government have not in the least affected her nationality.

The several and very large accretions that this country has added to its original comparatively small territory, have always been made, with a single exception, through purchase and not through conquest, and even in the single case of conquest alluded to, the United States preferred to give it the appearance of a purchase by paying some consideration for the conquered territory.

The Monroe doctrine, which has been grievously misunderstood by many, taking it as a menace from the United States against the independence of the Spanish-American nations, had just the opposite object, namely, to secure their autonomy and independence, and it always contemplated a defensive and not an aggressive policy. The Monroe doctrine originated in the doings of what was called the Holy Alliance, formed in 1815 by the monarchical nations of Europe, supporters of the doctrine of the divine rights of kings, soon after Napoleon's downfall, which, by a treaty signed by their Congress at Verona in 1822, agreed to join their efforts for the purpose "of putting an end to the principle of representative government, whenever it is known to exist, in the states of Europe, and to prevent it from being introduced into those states where it is not known." In 1821, France, supported by the Holy Alliance, suppressed an insurrection which had broken out in Spain, and restored to power Ferdinand VII. as an absolute monarch.

England, the chief European nation which had for centuries a successful representative government, could not look with indifference at the aims of the Holy Alliance, and Mr. Canning, then Prime Minister, informed Mr. Rush, United States Minister in London, in August, 1823, of the intentions of the Holy Alliance to hold another Congress to decide upon a plan of interference with the representative governments of South and Central America, and proposed that England and the United States should unite in declaring "that while the two Governments desired no portion of those colonies for themselves, they would not view with indifference any foreign intervention in their affairs, or their acquisition by any third party."

The United States decided not to act in conjunction with England in that matter, but to make such a declaration by themselves, and President Monroe, in his message to Congress of December 2, 1823, said :

"That the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European Power."

* * * * *

"We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those Powers, to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety."

It must be borne in mind that, while at the time when such a declaration was made (1823) the Government of the United States had acknowledged the independence of some of the Spanish-American colonies, like Mexico and Colombia, etc., the war of independence had not ended in several others, like Peru and Bolivia, as the final battle which accomplished the independence of the Spanish South American colonies was fought at Ayacucho, on the 9th of December, 1824, and that, although Mexico and Colombia had actually achieved their independence, Spain had not yet given up the struggle, as she sent an army to Mexico, which landed at Tampico, under General Barradas, in June, 1829, for the purpose of subduing that country.

The best exponent and interpreter of the Monroe doctrine, should any be required, would undoubtedly be John Quincy Adams, who was Secretary of State during the two Administrations of President Monroe, who succeeded Mr. Monroe as President of the United States, and who, in a special message to Congress of March 15, 1826, on the proposed Panama Congress, after

referring to the message of his predecessor, above quoted, which had been sent to Congress only two years and a few months before, said :

“Should it be deemed advisable to contract any conventional engagement on this topic, our views would extend no further than to a mutual pledge of the parties to the compact to maintain the principle in application to its own territory, and to permit no colonial lodgments or establishments of European jurisdiction upon its soil.”

The same spirit of fairness and liberality which inspired the Monroe doctrine appears recorded in Article I. of the treaty signed in Washington on the 19th of April, 1850, generally known as the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, wherein it was agreed “that neither [of the two contracting parties] will ever erect or maintain any fortifications commanding the same [the ship canal], or in the vicinity thereof, or occupy, or fortify, or colonize, or assume, or exercise any dominion over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, or any part of Central America.” The restriction of this stipulation to Central America is explained by the fact that the principal object the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty had in view, was to remove existing difficulties about the construction of an inter-oceanic ship canal through Central America.

But the question naturally arises, If the United States are not a conquering country, why did they wage a war of conquest against a neighboring republic in 1846 and 1847 to obtain over one-half of her territory? The answer is a very easy one. When the slavery question divided this country, the North being arrayed against the South, and when the immense domain of the West was being settled by Northern, or anti-slavery, men, it was natural that the South should seek for some territorial compensation at the expense of its southern neighbor, because it expected that any new States coming from that quarter would be slave States. This condition of things, which at the time made the acquisition of southern territory almost a measure of party self-preservation, explains the cause and object of the Mexican War. and of its natural consequence, the acquisition of Texas, New Mexico, and California, as well as the different attempts made then by Administrations belonging to the same political party to purchase the island of Cuba.

Even in this case the South was sorely disappointed, as it naturally expected that all the territory acquired from Mexico by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, would be organized into slave

States ; but out of the four States into which that territory was divided, only one, Texas, became a slave State, while the remaining three, California, Nevada, and a portion of Colorado, were all free States, and out of the three territories, New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona, into which the rest of the land then acquired was organized, only one, New Mexico, might have been a slave State, had they attained Statehood before the abolition of slavery. Could the leaders of the Mexican War have foreseen this result, it is not likely that they would have been so much in earnest for the acquisition of that territory.

So, instead of the Mexican acquisition giving the political preponderance to the party in favor of slavery, which was its principal, if not its only, aim, it only precipitated the final struggle for the abolition of slavery, which was so disastrous to the South, the promoter of the Mexican War.

But since slavery was abolished in the United States, the former condition of things has materially changed, and the old fundamental principles and doctrines of this government have regained control over this country. Under this new condition of things, brought about by the Mexican War and by its corollary, the Civil War, the acquisition of territory, whatever may be the reasons alleged in its favor or the popularity of the idea, has now assumed a new aspect, and a very serious one for this country, and, fortunately, has no longer anything to do with slavery.

It is very plain to any statesman, and, in fact, to anybody endowed with the faculty of anticipating events, how dangerous it would be to the future unity and welfare of this country further to increase its territorial area, especially when the new territory is already inhabited by a people of a different race, speaking a different language, and having different habits. It is, in my opinion, worth while pointing out some of these dangers, objections, and perils, notwithstanding that they are quite plain to any careful observer of human events.

The United States has already as much territory as any other free country ever had, and embraces within itself different elements, with different and antagonistic interests, which will, in all probability, grow stronger every day. The patriotism, talent, prudence, wisdom, and ingenuity of its best men will be heavily taxed during the next century to keep together the bonds of union which now happily exist, and prevent their disruption;

and should they succeed in this very difficult task, they will certainly have rendered a very great service to their country.

The Roman Empire, which was the government that covered the largest superficial area in the world, and the most stable one of which there is any record, excepting perhaps the Chinese, was not a free and popular government, like the one established here, but from the time of Augustus a military despotism, although for its age it was an enlightened one and very tolerant to the subjugated people; notwithstanding all this, when it was too much spread and embraced many discordant and antagonistical elements, it was first divided between the East and the West, and finally crumbled to pieces.

But if the American statesmen, whose task it is to pilot this great Nation to a safe port, undertake to increase the already existing difficulties of the situation, which, in all probability, will daily grow greater, by adding to them the introduction of a whole nationality of twelve millions of people, of almost insuperable assimilation, at least for many generations to come,—a people of a different race, speaking a different language and possessing very different habits and ideas, two-thirds of whom are pure-blooded Indians, who, although docile, peaceful, and law-abiding, are, on the whole, ignorant, and will, beyond all doubt, present the same social and political problems that are now offered by the colored race of the South, which are so difficult of a satisfactory solution that many of the most enlightened men of this country would prefer to see them out of it,—the task of keeping together this great country they will find almost impossible to accomplish.

But there is, in my opinion, another objection of still greater force, and of far more immediate effect, growing out of the annexation of Mexico to the United States. The United States are now about equally divided in politics, between the North and the South; so much so that a single State has often had a controlling vote in the Presidential elections. Since the abolition of slavery, which was for a long time the bone of contention between the political parties, the social question between labor and capital, or the economic question, as it might be more properly called, is taking its place. The whole South, or the *solid South*, is arrayed on one side, and the majority of the North on the other. If, under such circumstances, and even in case they should come to an agreement on that or other questions, there should be added to the present diffi-

culties of the situation twelve millions of a heterogenous, dissatisfied, unwilling people, with a representation in the Congress of the United States of fifty-six Senators and seventy-nine Representatives, according to the present apportionment, and the corresponding number of votes in the Electoral College, the fate and future of this country would then be placed in the hands of that dissatisfied element, which would thus exercise a controlling influence in its destinies. That influence will, of course, increase as the number of political parties may increase in this country.

I do not think it possible, unless the American institutions were substantially changed to meet that emergency, that the Mexican population could be kept disfranchised, especially when the right to vote and to have equal representation in Congress has been granted to the colored race here, and when all Mexicans now enjoy such political rights.

When it is taken into consideration that the spirit of the age is to extend rather than restrict self-government, and that the leading nations of the world, who have made the largest conquests, have come to the conclusion that the best way to keep their dependencies and colonies is to grant them the precious boon of self-government,—a principle practised here on a larger scale than anywhere else, and which accounts, in a great measure, for the preservation and growth of this great country,—it would appear almost a folly to suppose that it would be denied to Mexico, in case of its annexation to the United States, even if this could be accomplished by conquest.

To be sure, the Mexican Senators and Members of Congress could not, by themselves, carry out any measure of any kind, but that fact would not deprive them of a controlling influence in the legislative power of the United States, and their number would be sufficient to defeat many measures. If the question which arose in 1861 had been presented under such circumstances, they would, in all probability, have sided with the South, and the disruption of the country would have been sanctioned by the authority of Congress. Besides, such a large number of Senators and Members, united and compact, could obtain many advantages by transactions and in other ways usual now in the course of legislative affairs.

The United States are now decidedly against the immigration of Chinese, for the reason mainly that they work for lower

wages than native citizens. The feeling of not allowing the competition of foreign cheap labor with the native is growing so strong that it has begun to affect the laws about European immigration, and there exists a marked tendency to restrict the coming into this country of what are called pauper immigrants.

The annexation of Mexico would revolutionize materially the labor system of the United States, and the objections to Chinese and European pauper immigrants would have, should Mexico be incorporated, tenfold force. At least three millions of able-bodied Mexican laborers, whose wages range now from twelve and a half to fifty cents a day, and who would be quite willing to come north or west for the purpose of earning higher wages, would be thrown on the market, clothed with the rights of citizenship, and without any possibility of closing to them the doors of the country, as they are now practically closed to the Chinese. To be sure, their present Mexican wages would then have to be increased, but in any case they would certainly remain lower than the present Chinese wages.

I have purposely refrained from dwelling on the actual difficulties of the subjugation of 12,000,000 of brave people, proud of their nationality, and ready to fight to the last extremity to preserve it, and on the difficulties of keeping subdued such a large number of people, because, although these considerations are very serious, and, in the opinion of many competent minds, should be enough to forbid such a conquest, and are not likely to be overlooked here, they have only a secondary importance when compared with the paramount gravity of the others, and for the sake of argument I am willing to assume that the conquest of Mexico could be accomplished; but I think it opportune to mention that a great military authority has recently said that a war with Mexico now would be quite a different affair from the one of 1846 and 1847, and its consequences would also be quite different. Although it is a law of nature that the stronger can subdue the weaker, there are several factors in a struggle between two nations which may affect the final issue, and often the result may not quite compensate the magnitude of the effort.

A mere glance of the history of the United States shows that, instead of encouraging annexation, especially since the Mexican War, they have, on the contrary, realized its serious objections and acted as if they were opposed to that step.

Should the United States intend to pursue the policy of annexation, it is but natural that they would begin with Canada, as the Canadians belong to the same race, speak the same language, have an identical origin, profess the same religion, and are practically the same people, divided only by an imaginary line. And yet there is no party here, to my knowledge, favoring the annexation of Canada by force or conquest, and some of the most prominent men of the country have expressed their opposition to such a measure, even if asked voluntarily by the Canadians. One of the strongest reasons advanced against such union is that about one-fourth of the Canadians are of French origin, and therefore difficult of assimilation.

There is another fact which shows how difficult it is to carry out the consolidation of governments, or annexation, under the institutions prevailing here. Great efforts have been made for some time to consolidate into a single municipal government the twin sister cities of New York and Brooklyn. They are really one city, divided only by a stream, as is London by the Thames, Paris by the Seine, and Rome by the Tiber, and yet the consolidation has not yet been effected, and a long time may elapse before it is accomplished. How much more difficult would it be to consolidate in a single government two different, independent nations.

Had this country desired the annexation of any portion of Mexico, it might have tried to accomplish it, availing itself of several opportunities which have been presented. From 1846 to 1848 some reckless political leaders of Yucatan took advantage of the invasion of Mexico by the army of the United States to proclaim the independence of that State, giving, as a reason for that step, that the central government of Mexico did not protect it against the invasion of the Maya Indians, provoked by the acts of said leaders, and assisted by the inhabitants of British Honduras or Belice, adjoining the rebel Indians, in providing them with arms and ammunitions from said colony to carry on a war of desolation and extermination against the white race. The *de-facto* rulers of Yucatan sent a representative to Washington, who, in the language of President Polk, in his special message to Congress of April 29, 1848, "laid a communication from the Governor of that State, in which the constituted authorities implored the aid of this Government to save them from destruction, offering, in case this should be granted, to transfer the dominion and

sovereignty of the peninsula to the United States. Similar appeals for aid and protection have been made to the Spanish and the English Governments."

While President Polk deprecated the acquisition of Yucatan, which had been declared neutral by him in the war against Mexico, he stated "that the United States could not consent to the transfer of the domain and sovereignty of that State to any European Power," intimated the convenience of a military occupation of Yucatan, and concluded by submitting "to the wisdom of Congress to adopt such measures as in their judgment may be expedient to prevent Yucatan from becoming a colony of any European Power,"—which could only be its annexation to the United States. A bill was forthwith introduced in the Senate to authorize the President to take military possession of Yucatan, and its approval was urged by all the friends of annexation. This incident afforded a very easy way to bring about the annexation to the United States of the whole peninsula of Yucatan, with its very important location, as it forms the southern entrance to the Gulf of Mexico; but notwithstanding all this, and although President Polk, who had made war on Mexico, was then in power, lent his support to the measure, the resolution, after a long debate, did not pass.

Another very good opportunity to accomplish the same purpose, perhaps on a larger scale and under far better circumstances, was offered by the French intervention. When the American Civil War ended in April, 1865, this country had a well-disciplined and equipped army, of about half a million of veteran soldiers, and could have sent a portion of the same to assist Mexico in her struggle against the French Emperor, demanding at the end of the war, the payment in territory of its expenses, notwithstanding Mexico's resistance. Instead of following such a policy, the Administration then ruling this country preferred, precisely with a view to avoiding the possibility of such a result, to follow a neutral course, while giving to Mexico a decided moral support. I was at the time in Washington, representing Mexico, and I know well the views of that Administration.

If the United States had had any desire to acquire territory of the Spanish-American Republics, and specially of Central America, they have had several opportunities, growing out of the complications which have arisen in those states, in which they could have attempted to do so with an apparent show of reason,

such as other nations have had in similar cases. Perhaps the occupation and control of Nicaragua by Walker, whose government was recognized by the United States, offered not the least of such opportunities, notwithstanding the provisions of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. Should they ever have had any such designs, they would never, of course, have signed such treaty.

The rejection by the Senate of the United States of the treaty annexing Santo Domingo is another fact very significant in this respect.

All thoughts of annexation being discarded, as they are practically now, the wisest policy to be pursued between the United States and Mexico, and one to which all political parties in this country seem now to adhere, would be, in my opinion, so to enlarge the political, social, and commercial relations between the two Republics as to identify them in great commercial and industrial interests, but without diminishing the autonomy or, much less, destroying the nationality of either. That policy would give to the United States and to Mexico all the advantages of annexation without any of its drawbacks. Both countries have already practically been made a single postal territory. It is to be hoped that before long their commercial intercourse will grow in such proportions as to make possible and convenient to both something more than commercial reciprocity. Their contiguous territory closely united by several trunk lines of railroad will necessarily hasten that result.

Public opinion is divided in Mexico about the best policy to be pursued toward the United States. The conservative, or Church party, as well as a large portion of the people, inspired by the recollections of the disastrous war of 1846 and 1847, which General Grant characterized as unjust, and ignoring or overlooking the political changes which have since occurred in this country, are always afraid of annexation, and advocate the policy of isolation from, and complete non-intercourse with, the United States; while the liberal party, having the bond of similarity of political institutions, considers the contiguity of territory as a stubborn fact which cannot be ignored, and believes that the best way to prevent annexation is to open the country to the United States, and to grant to them all reasonable advantages, so as to make annexation useless and even dangerous. In pursuance of that policy, the old Mexican land laws have been recently modified,

and the most liberal railroad, mineral, and other grants have been freely given to its citizens.

But both parties, and, in fact, the whole country to a man, are decidedly opposed to annexation, not only because they are proud of their nationality, but also because they have the conviction that annexation for them means extermination, and naturally they are not willing to contribute to their own destruction. I do not share these views, myself, so far as the extermination of the race now living in Mexico is concerned, because I do not think that 12,000,000 of people can be easily exterminated, but that makes no difference when the whole country holds them.

I think that these few remarks are enough to dispose of the question of annexation by the free will of the Mexicans.

For the present, and in all probability for some time to come, reciprocity is all that is needed for the development of trade relations between the two countries. Their territorial contiguity, and the steel bands which now connect them, require special rules to foster and develop their commercial intercourse, somewhat different from those applied to other countries. Reciprocity has, besides, the advantage of allowing the reform of the tariff laws of a country to be made for a compensation to itself and with great benefit to the other country. If, for instance, the United States should decide now, with a view to reduce their revenue, or for any other reason satisfactory to themselves, to abolish the duty on sugar, as they did some time ago the duty on coffee, they would gain nothing but a reduction of revenue, in case the abolition was extended to all nations; but if it is made only for Mexico, they would receive an ample compensation in favor of their products and manufactures. Besides, reciprocity, as agreed upon with Mexico in the pending treaty, does not restrict in any manner the constitutional power of the Congress of each country to alter, at their will, their respective revenue laws.

Commercial union presents a great many more difficulties to overcome. If by commercial union between two countries it is understood that both should have the same tariff laws for the importation of foreign articles, and mutually receive free of duties their own, difficulty will at once arise as to who will make, amend, and repeal such laws. If the Congress of each country, simultaneously, but independently, it would be very difficult for them to come to an agreement, representing countries with different needs

and interests. A joint Congress, in which both countries should be represented, would be subject to serious objections, besides requiring a modification of the fundamental laws of the two. They would have to be represented as equals, or in proportion to their population or their territorial area. If as equals, the larger might suffer in its interests ; and if in proportion to their population or territory, the smaller one would be the sufferer.

But even restricting commercial union to the free importation in each country of the products and manufactures of the other,—which measure could properly be called unrestricted reciprocity,—keeping both their respective tariffs, issued in accordance with their Constitution for the products and manufactures of other countries, provision should be made about the way to modify their revenue laws ; because if in the case of American cotton goods, for instance, they should be declared by Mexico free for all other countries, the United States would then cease to derive the advantages of reciprocity ; and how such laws should be amended and repealed is a matter very difficult to decide, as in that case it would be necessary to give to either country a voice in the enactment of the laws of the other, which would hardly be acceptable to either, and would, again, require the modification of the fundamental laws of both.

The question of commercial union between Mexico and the United States presents such complex problems that it is more advisable to let the needs and exigencies of the future indicate the way of solving them : for the present all the interests and needs of both countries would, in my opinion, be subserved with restricted reciprocity, like that agreed upon in the pending treaty.

In conclusion, I would express my sincere conviction that the United States desire above all things the increasing prosperity and secured stability of Mexico and of the other Spanish-American Powers, and that they are really anxious for closer and more friendly relations. We have not heretofore known as much of each other as we ought to have done, and our mutual knowledge and understanding are certainly the first step to take before we can reach more satisfactory results.

M. ROMERO.